

SOCIAL ACTION

APRIL 1952

ELECTION RESULTS

IS A BONUS A BOON ?

STUDYING TOGETHER

REDDENING HORIZON

COMICS AND SUPER-COMICS

As. 6

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL ORDER

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SOCIAL ACTION

VOL. 2 No. 1

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HERE AND THERE

Congratulating the Masses

Shri. Jawaharlal Nehru rightly claimed that our first trial at universal suffrage was a success. The number of voters (over one hundred million out of 170 million electors) was sufficient proof that the people were keen on the process and that the system was adapted to the illiterate masses. On the next occasion the system may yet be improved in several ways.

Results

The Congress party has secured a fair majority in the Central Parliament and in most provinces; it may even claim to represent the millions who have not taken the trouble of opposing them. The Communists came up as the second largest group in Parliament. The Socialists are third, and the other parties did poorly but the Independents are numerous enough to splash a Milky Way on the electoral firmament. The total votes tell a different story: in the elections to the House of the People, the Congress got 44 million votes,

the Socialists 11 million, the Communists 6 million only.

The results are awkward enough to create two problem States : Madras and Travancore-Cochin. No party has a clear majority, and though the Congress will work hard to form a ministry, the Communists fondly nurse the hope of wrecking the Congress rule. The Communist success in these two States created sensation and anxiety. Their success, however, was not large enough to cause immediate alarm. It was serious enough to arouse the complacency of the Congress party and of the Independents and to wake up the lethargists who failed to give electoral proceedings the importance they have.

Analysing Results

In Madras the electoral success of Communists is generally ascribed to several causes : warm faith, well-knit organisation and hard work by the party itself, discontent over the food situation, separatist tendencies in the Andhra districts which claim linguistic basis for administrative division.

The case of Travancore-Cochin calls for a more detailed study, as it is of more concern to the majority of our readers. The results show a distinct swing to the left and are the outcome of a discontent which was not of a transient nature. Rural dissatisfaction was largely a matter of food. The State is reliably reported to be short of its requirements in rice by as much as sixty percent ; procurement at unsatisfactory prices was a source of harassment ; large masses of landless labourers, unemployment of the educated many, and semi-starvation make up the core of the economic factor of the discontent. Moreover Travancore-Cochin

as well as Madras feels that Delhi is very distant in space and attitude from Southern India and that the progressive infiltration of South Indians into the administrative services all over India has not yet secured due recognition for Southern merits and claims.

One must also take into account the painstaking and well organised propaganda of the United Leftist Front eager and clever in manipulating every grievance, every case of bribery, nepotism and inefficiency.

What of the Christian Vote ?

It is often alleged that the Christian vote has unexpectedly been cast on the left. The unwise treatment of Christians by the State Government, particularly in matters of education, caused a deep disappointment; repeated proclamations of equality in grants repeatedly belied by glaring discriminations, continuous disregard of constitutional provisions and of instructions from the Central Government by local Congress officials could only work as a perverse irritant. In short, the Christian community was under a severe strain which was made more dangerous by lack of political experience. A fair proportion of their votes went to Independents, and, it is said, a certain number to the United Leftist Front. How many went to the Left is not easy to calculate.

What an Analysis Said

The *Eastern Economist* published a study by one of its readers. Out of the 44 elected Congress members in the State Assembly there are 21 Christians (though Christians make only 26 per cent of the population); out of the six Congress members returned to the House of the People five are Christians. On the other hand, out of the 32 U. L. Front and 12 Socialist members of

the State Assembly, only two are Christians. Out of the 11 Independents, six are Christians (all Rightists).

On the other hand, among Hindus, only four Ezhavas are in the Congress and 16 are leftists ; 20 Nairs out of 30 members are leftists. In the predominantly Christian areas hardly was a leftist returned and it was fair to add that most of the so-called Syrians are Roman Catholics. To this analysis the Editor retorted that Christians may well have been elected by non-Christians and that the correspondent admitted the fact when he wrote that "when the Leftists began to win, the Christians rallied round the Congress in all constituencies".

We may leave to local experts the trouble of sorting out estimates. The lesson remains clear for all. The last Congress ministry was unfair and unwise in irritating Christians ; unwise and illogical were the electors with a Christian name who voted for the U. L. Front. May all learn the lesson !

A. L.



BONUS—A SHARE IN PROFITS

In modern industrial parlance, the word bonus is rarely used without a qualifying adjunct. We hear of production-bonus, incentive-bonus, attendance-bonus. But the word bonus standing all by itself is a type of profit sharing that has become a commonplace in many branches of Indian Industry. The Textile Mills in Ahmedabad, Bombay, Madras or Coimbatore, all pay their workers an annual bonus out of the profits of the companies. The Steel Industry, the Jute Industry, the

Cement Industry, and the Sugar Industry have been compelled to follow suit. This belated recognition of the right of the workman to a share in the profits of the company is the result of Trade Union pressure and Government legislation through the Labour Industrial Tribunals. Yet the process has been a slow one. Even today, owners and managers of factories regard payment of the bonus as they might the painful extraction of a sound tooth. In many cases it is only the legal decision that compels them to practise what they consider to be sheer charity, but what in reality often amounts to a claim of social justice.

Bonus—A Share in Profits

The Labour Appellate Tribunal recently gave an important decision on what was to be understood by the term 'bonus', how it was to be paid, and how much was to be paid. The question of the payment of bonus arose out of a legal conflict between the Textile Mills Association of Bombay and their employees. The Bombay decision of the Appellate Tribunal has now become the precedent and the pattern for most of the awards that deal with the question of bonus-payment. According to the decision, bonus is a share in profits, the share that accrues to the workmen. How is it to be computed? Out of the gross profits of the industry, a certain portion was to be laid aside for depreciation of the machinery, plant and building of the company. Next taxation on profits had to be deducted. Then a further portion of the remainder was to be set aside for reserves for rehabilitation and modernisation of the plant. Finally a dividend of not more than 6% on shares and 2 to 4% interest on working capital was to be withdrawn. The surplus was to be distributed as the bonus for the workmen.

The Ahmedabad Award

This is how the award of two months' bonus was paid to the workmen in the Textile Mills of Ahmedabad for the year 1949.

		<i>In crores</i>
Gross Profit	..	5.50
Deduct Depreciation	..	1.58
		<hr/> 3.92
Bonus at 2 months	..	1.24
		<hr/> 2.68
Taxation at As. 6½ in the rupee	..	1.10
		<hr/> 1.58
Reserves for rehabilitation	..	0.56
		<hr/> 1.02
Dividend at 6% on paid-up capital	..	0.67
		<hr/> 0.35
Interest on working capital at 2%	..	0.25
		<hr/> 0.10
		<hr/>

Workmen's Claim

The Tribunal held that the workmen had a claim to a share in the profits of the industry. The nature of the claim and its extent have not been deeply analysed. Their Lordships felt that since both Labour and Capital contributed to the acquiring of profits, equity demanded that both parties should share in the common prosperity. The judges were merely reflecting the changed mentality in a world that is grudgingly beginning to be aware of the rights of the labourer. The workman is slowly emerging out of his incognito

status as a mere 'hand' to play a higher and more important function as a partner in industry. This final event is still a long way off, but the trends seem to point in that direction.

Bonus and Basic Wage

The bonus is computed entirely on the basic wage. Dearness allowance is rigidly excluded. The basic wages prevailing in the various industries of India today are between Rs. 26 and Rs. 30. In certain places and in the minor industries, the minimum may be less. These amounts were fixed as the basic wages in the nineteen-thirties, when the cost of living was a third of what it is today. The difference in price levels has not been remedied by raising the basic wage. Instead a dearness allowance was paid. At first a flat rate of Rs. 25 or Rs. 30 used to be tacked on to the salaries on the lowest grade. The amount depended on the strength of organised labour. Where it was strong, as for instance, in Ahmedabad the dearness allowance was comparatively high. But unorganised labour is paid no dearness allowance even at present. A more scientific method of paying the allowance has since been evolved. The cost of living index in the different States is taken as the measure for calculating the figure. As the index rises or falls, a corresponding sum is added or subtracted from the amount. Approximately every point increase in the index is paid at the rate of 2 as. or 2 as. 6 p., and the same is deducted for every point decrease.

The Living Wage

The Tribunal admits in fairness that the allowance does not compensate fully for the increase in prices.

Management is of opinion that labour should also share a part of the national burden of short rations and high prices. This is the alleged reason for not fully compensating labour for the rise in the cost of living. The argument is patently false. It is not for the weaker partner to bear the heavier burden.

Both everyday experience and family budget enquiries make it amply clear that where more than one member of the working class family is a wage earner, the family income suffices to cover needs, at least in the large industrial towns. But when the father is the sole wage earner, basic wage plus dearness allowance falls below the margin of family subsistence. The Appellate Tribunal has urged management to pay workmen a living wage, whenever the financial condition of the industry allows it. The 'capacity to pay' the living wage is a fundamental *sine qua non* for its payment. But it is because the industry fails to pay the living wage even where it possesses this capacity, that bonus takes on a new connotation.

A Deferred Wage

In this case, the bonus is no longer merely a share in profits. It becomes part of the wage that is long overdue, which ought to be paid to the workman in strict justice. Call it social justice if you prefer, but it still remains a stronger claim on the employer than the demand for a share in profits. Let me quote one of the Judges of the Industrial Court who has something pertinent to say on the point. "Their Lordships of the Appellate Tribunal," he observed, "have held that every industry which has got the capacity to pay is bound to pay the living wage to its workers. But where it has not got that capacity or where its prosperity

is uncertain and its stability is in question, or where it underwent losses, it may not find its way to pay the living wage. So as the worker is entitled to a living wage, he may very well claim bonus to the extent that the current wage falls short of the living wage. In that sense, bonus partakes of the character of a 'deferred wage'." He continues, "But bonus cannot be placed on the same footing as a deferred wage for good reasons. If bonus were equivalent to a deferred wage, then the company would have been liable to pay bonus, even if it had suffered losses. But as it has been pointed out that in the event of loss, the claim of bonus is liable to fail. A question might arise that if bonus was meant to make up the deficiency between the current wage and the living wage, then there would be no claim for bonus after the living wage has been reached. But it is maintained that the claim for bonus would even then be sustained. The reason is that if there are profits, the entire credit or the benefit thereof cannot be arrogated to Capital alone. Labour must have contributed a large share towards such an achievement. So why should it be denied the benefit?"¹

These sentiments accord with the ideas of the 'Quadragesimo Anno' of Pius XI. After defending the essential justice of the wage contract, the Pope says, "Nevertheless in the present state of human society, We deem it advisable that the wage contract should, when possible, be modified somewhat by a contract of partnership, as is already being tried in various ways to the no small gain both of the wage-earners and of the employers. In this way wage-earners and

1. *Labour Law Journal*, Vol. I 1952, p. 71.

other employees participate in the ownership or the management, or in some way share in the profits."²

Difficulties

The interpretation of the decision of the Appellate Tribunal and its application to a particular set of circumstances has caused much bickering between management and labour. For instance in the case of the Ahmedabad award, the Textile Labour Association representing the workmen demanded a higher scale of bonus. They alleged that the sums allotted for depreciation and reserves for rehabilitation and modernisation were an over-estimate. They also accused the Managing Agents of the Companies of charging too high a commission for their services. They thought that buildings and plant should not be included in the amount calculated for depreciation.

On the other hand, Management pleaded that both depreciation and reserves were underestimated and that interest on the working capital should be calculated at 4% and not 2%, as the Court had done.

The Industrial Court waived aside the claims of either party. It followed the direction of the Appellate Tribunal to the letter and calculated the amount to be set aside for depreciation and reserves according to the percentages prescribed by the Tribunal. It finally arrived at the award of two months' bonus to the workmen. Against the contention of the Textile Labour Association, the Court held that plant and buildings had to be included in the items for depreciation. On the other hand, it decided against the Textile Mills Association that the amounts credited to these items had been under-estimated.

2. *Quadragesimo Anno*, para 65.

Bonus Quantum

In another decision in which the Firestone, Tyre and Rubber Co. of Bombay was implicated, the bonus was raised from one month's to four months' basic wages. Although the men had struck work for nearly three months, the Company had not suffered any losses. Its profits were on a level with those of the previous year. The Court decided that the Company had a sufficient surplus to justify the payment of the bonus prescribed.

The Coimbatore Textile Mills were compelled to pay six months' bonus because their profits were adequate for the purpose. The same method of calculation was used as had been laid down by the Appellate Tribunal. The Unions demanded a bonus that would cover both basic wages and dearness allowance, but the Judge followed precedent and restricted the award to a computation of basic wages only.

No Profits

On the other hand, Textile Mills that showed no profits were exempted from paying a bonus to their workmen. Out of the 65 mills in Ahmedabad some 10 mills appealed against the verdict of the Industrial Court on the ground of incapacity to pay. Some of them had suffered losses, others had no surplus left over after the prior deductions for rehabilitation and reserves had been made. The Court accepted their pleas after having examined their accounts and decreed that their workmen were not entitled to claim any bonus.

Balance Sheets

It is well known that the balance sheets of some companies are often an occasion for concealing their real financial position. The items that they contain

cannot be fully accounted for. There are so many ways of manipulating income and expenditure, that it is difficult to gauge the real state of affairs. The Trade Unions, acting on the suspicion of such dubious practices, have demanded that the financial situation of the units in a particular industry be scrutinised by their representatives. Managements have invariably refused at first, but have been compelled to do so by the Court. When the Coimbatore Textile Mills objected to such scrutiny, the Tribunal waived aside their pleas as 'antiquated and antediluvian'. As a rule the balance sheets have been accepted as presenting a comparatively true picture of the business for lack of better information and the awards of the Tribunals have been based on them.

(To be continued)

A. Fonseca.

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THE FRIBOURG UNION

Last year saw the sixtieth anniversary of *Rerum Novarum*; all over the world meetings and essays commemorated the Workers Charter, and even Catholic India had a modest spate of celebrations. What was most striking among the many reports which reached us is that there was one, and one only, that stressed a leading idea of the Social Encyclical, namely, the rehabilitation of the proletariat through easy access to private property. It was a leader in *The Catholic Worker* of New York. *The Catholic Worker* is a unique monthly of the U.S.A., unique because it is the only one to give systematic proofs that not all Americans are prosperous, and to foster mysticism in actual poverty. In the September issue, Rev. I. McDonough

suggested that 'the frail body of Pope Leo XIII must have turned and tossed since it was interred in its tomb' because his cherished plans were frustrated. In fact some of his leading ideas are like being forgotten by people who should know better; working people are not interested in ownership but only in their jobs; labour unions clamour for increased wages and nationalisation and very few make any allusion to the restoration of liberty through the distribution of property; the governments have done nothing to help citizens to become owners; the people seem satisfied with being well-fed slaves, especially when the slaves must put on a soldier's uniform. Planned economy, food controls, price controls, social security services, all measures to improve national prosperity and individual comfort, are devised in such a way as to build up the dictatorship of governments and politicians. There is some effort or at least some pretence at distributing the national income, but none at distributing national wealth; there is little thought of individual freedom and little preoccupation about the impact of government monopolies on the liberty of the citizens. Possibly longer experience is needed before people react against the constraining power of bureaucracy or the boredom of welfare administration. At present too many nurse 'a superstitious confidence' in the Welfare State to provide for all human needs, and the superstition will vanish only with experience. This happens in the states which are intent on mass comfort; worse can be seen when states aim only at efficiency and power. Material well-being falls short of man's requirements, but even in material welfare, the manner in which it is achieved is as important as its level, and the manner must be essentially respectful of man's dignity, liberty and ideals.

Regard for man's build up, and his liberty, and more particularly the role of well dissiminated property in suiting man's nature were emphasized in *Rerum Novarum*, in *Quadragesimo Anno*, and in the many Papal pronouncements down to the repeated cautions Pius XII made these last three years on the failings of the present social order. It was a recurrent theme in the many studies which made the background of Leo XIII's encyclical. It was underlying their vindication of the natural right to private property ; it was explicit when they discussed workingmen's wages. In particular it was a leitmotif in the studies of the Fribourg Union which did so much to co-ordinate Catholic social thought and to prepare the ground for *Rerum Novarum*.

In an essay on the Fribourge Union published in *Les Dossiers de l'Action Sociale Catholique*, Mr. G. Hoyois recalled that Papal pronouncements of world-importance do not happen like a bolt from the blue ; like all great human works they are the climax of many efforts ; atomic fission was due to the convergence of international researches, the *Summa Theologica* of St. Thomas Aquinas blossomed on the studies of Aristotle and of medieval thinkers. The *Rerum Novarum* itself was prepared by multiple studies in several nations ; though it bears the unique character of Papal authority, and the imprint of the personal genius of Leo XIII, its raw materials had been prepared by many a social philosopher and social worker. Prominent among them were the scholars of the Fribourg Union.

It is unnecessary to go as far back as Villeneuve-Bargemont (1784-1850) who was a precursor of modern social Catholicism, and whose *Economie Politique Chretienne* rarely gets the attention it deserves. We may

take as the first landmark of the Leonine social movement, his encyclical *Quod Apostolici Muneris* (28-12-1878) which denounces the marxist, communist and nihilist theories and recalls the evangelical doctrine. The second landmark is 1882 when the Pope suggested the creation of the "Roman Circle of Social Studies" which, in his view, had to "study all problems of social economy in the Christian light, and to specialize in the questions bearing on the conditions of workmen". The Director was Mgr. D. Jacobini, who was to be raised to the cardinalate, and who had already under Pius IX started a mutual help society for artists. Illustrious names figure in the list of members: Cavagnis, Svampa, Giustini, Talamo, Denifle, Kuefestein, Lorin, Decurtins, Mermillod, etc. Mgr. (later Cardinal) Mermillod added to his oratorical talent the distinction of having been forced out of his country by a radical government. He was a champion of Ireland and Poland, and a keen student of social questions: "To solve the social problem one would need the head of Thomas Aquinas and the heart of a nursing sister". He was soon a prominent member of the Roman Study Circle which from 1882 tackled vital problems: private property, just wages, labour conditions, social organisation, etc.

In the preceding decade France had witnessed the birth of the Union of Catholic Circles (*Oeuvre des Cercles Catholiques*). The disaster of the Franco-Prussian war, the subsequent terrorism of the Commune had alarmed noble souls like Maurice Maigren, Albert de Mun, le La Tour du Pin. de Mun took the lead and started the Union which he propagated throughout France; "Let us go to the masses; the higher classes must devote themselves to the working masses", was what he used to say in the beginning, whilst later he was wont to proclaim: "The conquest of the

mind and soul of the people can only be done by the workers themselves for they alone know their views and their ambitions". La Tour du Pin was to be the thinker and teacher in the movement for which he wrote '*Towards a Christian Social Order*'; his leading idea of a remedy to the bourgeois individualism was the reconstruction of the primary social organisms; church, family, profession. His diplomatic work had put him into touch with Austrian society and was to facilitate his future international influence.

A like social movement had developed in Germany and Austria with Bishop von Ketteler as leader and thinker: Karl de Vogelsang, de Blome, de Loewenstein, Kuefestein, Aloys and Alfred de Lichtenstein.

When in 1883 Mgr. Mermillod after ten years of exile was allowed by the Federal Council to re-enter Switzerland, he was appointed as Bishop of Lausanne and Geneva and took his residence at Fribourg. He was approached by La Tour du Pin and soon convened a meeting of the three movements in Italy, France, Germany and Austria. The International Union of Social Studies was born; after October 1884 it held sessions of 8 or 10 days every year in the Bishop's house. Year after year some forty scholars met regularly: de Mun, La Tour du Pin, H. Lorin, de Pascal, Loewenstein, Lehmkuhl, Blome, Kuefestein. Italy sent few members though it kept in touch by letters and occasionally deputed Toniolo, Liberatore. From Spain came de Cepeda; from Switzerland Decurtins and Python; from Belgium Helleputte and d' Ursel.

The conclusions of the Union soon took shape. By 1886 it had approved the views of Lehmkuhl and shaped their views of just wages as follows: "The wage necessary to the upkeep of the working classes,

in normal conditions and due regard paid to place and time, is the basic element of what any labour contract must give according to strict justice. Does this wage sufficiently meet the demands of social justice which in view of the common good regulates the relations between the various classes of society or between the individuals and the body social? One must doubt it. The working class has a right to find thanks to a complement to this basic wage the means of improving its condition, most particularly of acquiring some property.

The complement to the basic wage cannot everywhere have the same amount and the same form. It is made of a sharing in the industrial prosperity. Equity demands that this sharing in the prosperity of the industry which occupies him be correlative. Without pretending that such a clause would be necessary or sufficient to secure social peace, one must admit that it marks a progress on the very wage-system".

In 1887 it made an advance after a hot discussion on the role of the state in fostering social progress, and after having discussed the right administration of governmental finances and possessions, noted that the public authorities should intervene :

"(a) to regulate by law if necessary and in accordance with natural rights and acquired rights, the mutual relations between the various factors of production ;

(b) to suppress all abuses which seriously damage the common good ;

(c) to direct the political economy of a country *vis-a-vis* foreign powers for the sake of national prosperity ;

(d) to harmonise the activities of private undertakings with the common good whilst leaving as much freedom as possible to private initiative."

Moreover it admitted the thesis of Lehmkuhl that wherever a free contract between employer and worker leads to oppression or danger of oppression, public authorities may and even must, according to circumstances, take proper measures so that workers receive at least what is necessary for the upkeep of their families and be saved from misery. Such measures of the authorities binding in conscience and in strict justice.

Thanks to the influence of the French members, the Union supported the idea of re-establishing professional corporations with a view to prepare a co-operative order, "that form of social organisation based on the grouping of men according to their natural interests and their social functions and which seeks public and distinct recognition for such groups from the state". It also advocated international conventions on Sunday rest, working hours, security at work, etc.

When in Rome for the Sacerdotal Jubilee of Leo XIII, Mgr. Mermillod introduced a nine-member delegation from Fribourg, and was requested to submit a full report on the conclusions of the Union. A Memoir was soon ready: denunciation of a false notion of man's nature and purpose as the source of social evils; denunciation of individualism 'which had become the basis of modern social life' and 'the prime motive in economic activity; denunciation of the wrong notion of proprietary rights 'which has become the *jus utendi et abutendi* instead of being the *jus procurandi et dispensandi* subordinated to the divine plan that each man should be able to make a living through

his labour ; denunciation of trade as ' a mere means of speculation for greedy men ', etc.

Such were the leading ideas of the Fribourg group which had limited its work to study, on the basis as Mgr. Mermillod put it that " the idea of the Study group was that each idea becomes activity. The idea remains for a more or less long time in the minds of people, but normally there comes a day when it is translated into deeds ". " Study justifies action. " There were quite a few people who preferred immediate action ; of that type was Leon Harmel who had organised his factory at Val des Bois on the basis of a Christian corporation and who had organised his many pilgrimages to Rome recruited from all ranks of society. In the late eighties there were also the troubles with the Knights of Labour whom Cardinal Gibbons and his episcopal colleagues had defended ; there was the intervention of Cardinal Manning who had successfully intervened in the 1889 strike of the London dockers. From a little everywhere Rome was asked for an authoritative judgement on the studies and deeds of Catholic social thinkers and workers.

Leo XIII was only too ready to comply with such requests and proclaim the doctrinal principles he had long meditated. He sought the help of Cardinal Zigliara, a modest and scholarly thomist specialist. He also created Mgr. Mermillod a cardinal with residence in Rome. The draft encyclical was prepared but the Pope considered it was much too theoretical and he gave his Private Secretary, Mgr. Bocali, detailed instructions to prepare a revised version. After further correction, it became the text of the *Rerum Novarum*.

Several features marked the work of the Fribourg Union of the Social Studies: co-operation between priests and laymen, between theologians and philosophers on one side and economists, employers and social workers on the other; co-operation between apostolic men of different nations.

One great drawback of the Union was that it had been too closely associated with and dependent on the person of Mgr. Mermillod; so much so that when he left Fribourg for Rome where he died in 1892, the Union did not survive. It was only some thirty years later that a new international organism was created to replace it. After the 1914-18 war, Mr. E. Duthoit, President of the Social Week of France and Mr. G. Helleputte of Belgium's delegation to Fribourg requested Cardinal Mercier to take up the good work in hand; in 1920 the International Union of Social Studies of Mechlin was founded. It has few members; even one regrets it has none from India, China, Africa, Australia or South-America. It works with undemonstrative erudition, and it meets each year. So far it has published doctrinal summaries remarkable for their clarity and conciseness: *Social Code*, *Code of International Ethics*, *Family Code*. A broader membership might prove helpful in drawing up statements on the right of colonisation, on international relations, on problems of minorities, etc. The wording of doctrinal statements and guiding principles, if it is to be readily available for easy applications, calls for extreme care and caution. One can only wish the International Union of Social Studies be given the recognition it deserves for the great work it has done, as well as opportunity and means to spread its influence all the world over.

A. Lallemand.

RED STAR OVER INDIA

"The Issue in this state today is whether we should have a full-fledged democratic Government believing in the ideals set before us by Mahatma Gandhi or a totalitarian Government led or sponsored by Communists who believe in dictatorship." So said Mr. V. V. Giri on his recent election to Parliament. We will leave the Gandhian ideals for another occasion and consider here the recent Communist gains in this country.

It's an ill wind that blows no one any good. Communist successes have done this much good; they have convinced a number of people, at least for a time, that there is a real danger of a Communist regime in this country. Until quite recently it was very common to hear on all sides loud assertions that the Communists were a pitifully weak and harmless minority, more of a curiosity than anything else. Those who speak thus constitute a large group in the country, are extremely gullible, and can see stars of only good omen—of red stars they profess never to have heard. When travelling abroad they take almost as a personal insult the suggestion or inquiry that Communism is spreading in India, and have often been known to assert roundly that there is no such thing in the country. Well, perhaps, the election results will help them to change their minds at least until an adroit Communist smoke-screen makes them once more deny the existence of the red star.

The Encirclement

The rapid spread of Communism in Asia and the Far East is not fortuitous. Lenin developed the theory

that imperialism is the last stage of capitalism and consequently a defeat of colonialism must mean a victory for Communism. It is therefore according to plan that Communist strongly support all nationalist aspirations, not, it should be carefully noted, because they are particularly interested in the national liberation of this or that country, but because such a movement presents the best opportunities for revolt and continued unrest. Stalin always showed himself sceptical of the theories held by the old Bolsheviks, handed down from Marx and Engels, that Communism must first spread and be triumphant in the highly industrialised West. Stalin, unlike Lenin and the other emigres, except for a brief visit, has never been out of Russia and has always regarded Asia as a more fruitful field of Communist propaganda than the West. Nearly thirty years ago, he made an unsuccessful attempt to win China over to the Communist fold, attempts that have finally been crowned with a resounding success.

It is foolish to imagine that the rise of Communism in Asia is solely due to extreme poverty coupled with a desire for independence, and that a little more food and cloth will make Communism disappear. Poverty, unrest and national aspirations have all been *occasions* used by Communists to further their end ; of themselves, these factors would not create Communism, though they undoubtedly are a favourable breeding ground for it. The distinction is important and the failure to distinguish between the cause of the Communist rise in Asia, which is Communist doctrine, effective indoctrination and zeal, and the occasion and means used, is the source of much confusion.

Communism has spread so rapidly since the end of the war that we scarcely realise that India is in

danger of being encircled by a red ring. Chaos and political banditry is spreading in Indo-China, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma and Tibet. The Middle East is seething with discontent. Most of these countries make news with one notable exception—Tibet. The passing of this country under a Communist regime has raised less interest than the winning of the year's tennis championship. This is doubtless partly due to the previous isolation of the country, but also, one suspects, to the fact that no big power had any financial interests involved.

The Chinese Communists came saying that they wished nothing more than to re-establish the old relations between Tibet and China. What has happened? Tibet has been completely occupied by Chinese military forces, the familiar confiscation of private property has begun, Tibetan and Indian monies have been replaced by Chinese currency, the profitable wool trade has been diverted from India to China, intense Communist propaganda has commenced, a "thought-reform movement" is going ahead, which means that if you ever thought Communist doctrine subversive you had better change your mind or else—religious freedom has been curtailed, and the Dalai Lama has been deprived of real religious authority. Everything is taking the familiar pattern of complete subservience to Communist designs. Since Assam has a border contiguous to both Tibet and Burma it is not surprising to hear the Assam Government speak of a "systematically organised reign of terror, particularly in the upper and lower regions of Assam" which the same Government now claims to have quelled.

India then is in a somewhat similar position to a household which is surrounded by burning houses. Some

members of the household think there is danger of their house catching fire also, while others loudly assert there is no such danger and tranquilly sit smoking on upturned petrol tins.

The Internal Situation

Let us now turn and examine the state of affairs within the house. The election results have come as an unpleasant surprise to many, and as a very pleasant surprise to the Communists, for one may believe that even they did not hope for such a success. The election results to date are :

HOUSE OF THE PEOPLE

Seats : 497.

Results declared : 489.

Votes Polled : 10,75,78,776.

Party	Candidates set up	Seats won	Total Votes
Congress	.. 480	363	4,78,39,832
Socialists	.. 255	12	1,10,09,740
Communists & Allied Parties	.. 70	27	58,52,794
K. M. P.	.. 137	10	56,60,799
Jan Sangh	.. 94	3	32,15,367
Hindu Mahasabha	.. 30	4	9,79,154
R. R. P.	.. 57	3	19,17,686
Peasants & Workers Party	.. 16	2	10,55,796
Scheduled Castes' Federation	.. 32	2	23,70,255
Ganatantra Parishad	.. 13	5	9,56,972
Independents	.. 453	36	1,55,21,746
Other Parties	.. 166	22	91,46,546
Invalid votes : 20,52,089			

The above includes seven Congress, two Independents and one K.M.P.P. uncontested returns. Eight seats are to be filled by nomination by the President.

There is no need to repeat what has already been said in the Editorial, but a few extra remarks about the relation of the results to Communism may be

added. Although the Congress achieved a large majority, their greatest losses took place where there were the greatest Communist gains. Among the prominent names on the 'casualty list' was S. A. Dange, Communist leader from Bombay, but this set-back is compensated by other victories, especially by the resounding success of Mr. Ravi Narayana Reddi who polled the highest recorded number of votes, 3,09,162. With 27 seats the Communists form the largest single opposition block in the House of the People. Elections for the State Assemblies, with which we are not primarily concerned here, have roughly followed the same pattern as that of the House of the People: Congress comes out an easy first, followed by the Communists, and the Socialists who get a stronger third place than they have in the House of the People.

Instead of attributing the Communist success to a host of secondary causes and circumstances such as the failure of the monsoon, the food shortage, Prohibition, etc., and thereby confusing the whole issue, let us try to analyse the fundamental reasons which are deeper and more lasting than the transitory causes and circumstances which are so often unthinkingly proposed. The fundamental reasons for Communist gains would seem to be: firstly, a vague, ill-defined, illogical and often emotional admiration for things Communist, an admiration that has been on the increase since China turned Communist. This admiration is greatest among the educated middle class, especially those with a 'modern' education. Such people are immensely impressed by reports of the material progress made in the Soviet and by the news of recent reforms in China, while their critical faculties seem to be dead to reports from other sources of the atrocities and loss of freedom in Communist dominated

countries. Even those who are opposed to Communism because of its violent methods, find it difficult to shake off a sneaking regard for its doctrine. Even the Prime Minister himself has on more than one occasion, as recently at the Delhi Press Conference, expressed his admiration for certain fine sentiments and idealism possessed by Communism, while condemning it for being "utterly reactionary in outlook". Secondly, the Communists carefully planned and worked hard for their success. They proved once again how a small, compact, well chosen force with a clear-cut programme can succeed. They chose their constituencies well and prepared them carefully, and on election day saw to it that their supporters voted *en masse*. They wisely did not spread their forces over the country and in this they were in striking contrast with the amorphous, ill-organised attempts of the Socialist Party which suffered a spectacular defeat. This Party contested 255 seats to obtain only 12 as contrasted with the Communists who won 27 seats out of 70 contested. Moreover, the latter, unlike the Socialists, even when they lost, always polled a good number of votes. Thirdly, the electorate tired of speeches and seemingly empty promises wanted results. The Communists promised them what they wanted—and what was equally important—with a simplicity that all could understand. Fourthly, Communists have cleverly exploited the existing discontent over bad and insufficient food, poor wages, the danger of an increasing dependence on U.S.A., and every other form of material and local discontent.

If this analysis is true, then it follows that an improvement in material conditions will not mean the disappearance of Communism since fundamentally it does not owe its rise to bad material conditions but has

only made a clever use of them. Should the conditions change, then another set of circumstances will be exploited in much the same way, though it must be admitted that existing conditions are more favourable to an increase in Communism than an improved economic set-up would be. As long as the ideological attraction remains and men feel that Communism is a better way of life than what they now experience, then this philosophy will continue to exert its influence no matter what the material conditions may be. A failure to realise this fact is inherent in much anti-Communist propaganda both from the West and from this country itself. Hydro-electric schemes, tube-wells, mechanised agriculture and milk powder will bring desirable relief, but they will not satisfy the desire for justice and peace: man does not live by bread alone. If anti-Communists would meditate more deeply on this text, their efforts to stem the spread of Communism would be more successful.

Local Variants

Communist success came mainly from Madras, Travancore-Cochin, West Bengal, Hyderabad and Tripura, which together returned 26 out of the Communist total of 27 members. Although Communism has been long established in Travancore-Cochin, because there is a good percentage of Christians there, its successes were greater than expected. This State earns a good income for the national Exchequer from coir, pepper, and other exports and has the grievance that in return for its services that it has received bad rice. The high percentage of literacy in the State seems to point to the fact that poverty alone is not sufficient to arouse serious discontent unless the people become both conscious and expressive of their needs and

misery. Were there not also unnecessary contests between Christian candidates which split the vote and gave an advantage to their opponents? In Madras State too the separatist movement for an Andhra State, the many splinter parties with merely local aims, and a chronic food situation provided a suitable seedling ground for Communist propaganda.

These local variants give rise to two interesting reflections: the first is that contrary to the classical marxist theory, Communism so far has been very much of an agrarian movement in India; Madras, Travancore-Cochin and Hyderabad are predominantly agricultural, yet Communism is strongly rooted there. While it is true that Communists have considerable influence in some towns such as Alleppey, Madurai, Golden Rock (Tiruchirappalli), they have most certainly entrenched themselves in the countryside. That they have had no success in large cities like Bombay and Kanpur may mean that they wisely did not concentrate on the larger cities, but this does not deny the lesson that Communism can spread in agricultural India. The second reflection is that Communism succeeded in the South where the greatest number of Christians are found. Communist success there does not mean, as some have too hastily concluded, that Christians voted Communist, but one would like to know what percentage of them voted at all, and how the Christian percentage of voting compared with the Communist. Were they as eager to vote as the Communists? Such details would be very instructive and useful for future guidance and would repay the trouble of collecting such statistics.

The Pattern of the Immediate Future

As a preparation for the elections C.P.I. (Communist Party of India) called off its usual disruptive

revolutionary methods and even tried to dissociate itself from the violence still going on in Telengana, alleging that this was due to the acts of individuals and not of the Party. Since electoral means have paid such handsome dividends it is likely that the C.P.I. will now proceed to push home its advantages. Some of its immediate demands can be gathered from a statement made at the meeting which elected Mr. T. V. Thomas, Trade Union Leader of Alleppey, as leader of the United Front Legislature Party (this Party comprises the Communist, the Revolutionary Socialist and the Kerala Socialist Party). At that meeting Communists demanded: a removal of the ban on political parties (*i.e.*, on themselves); a removal of the ban on trade unions (*i.e.*, Communist trade unions); the release of political prisoners (*i.e.*, Communists); the withdrawal of warrants against some political prisoners (Communists), and the cancellation of laws restricting the freedom of the press (*i.e.*, the Communist press). These demands mean, in other words, complete liberty to spread Communism throughout the country.

That Communists are ready to associate with other leftist parties is shown both by the above examples from Travancore-Cochin and from the formation of the United Democratic Front in Madras, a strange conglomeration of parties opposed to Congress. From previous experience it is obvious that the C.P.I. will work with other parties in order to absorb or liquidate them. The Socialists alone have refused to receive the Communist embrace.

It is not to be expected that the C.P.I. will follow the legal line for long—they are a revolutionary party. Mr. S. A. Dange, Secretary of the Election Board, C.P.I., after saying that membership of the Party was only

30,000, but "sympathy and support" very great, practically admitted that violence would be used when he said: "If the masses come to believe that the State can never be overcome by other means, they will take to insurrection. If the masses decide, we will supply the leadership." *"We will supply the leadership."* This is no idle boast. It will become a terrifying reality unless there is a much wider realisation of what Communism stands for, and of the danger both of a Communist encirclement of the country and of a rapid spread of its doctrine within the country.

A. Nevett.



NOTES ON "COMICS"

Several cities of America were of late alarmed at the increase in a type of juvenile crime. Parking meters were wrenched from the curb, broken open and looted. *Time* (25-2-1952) reported that the police voiced the dark suspicion that Dick Tracy himself, the fearless comic-strip detective, had inspired these petty robberies. The strip which appears in some 350 papers had been showing a gang of teen-age hoodlums doing just that. Tracy's creator, *Chicago Tribune* cartoonist, Chester Gould retorted: "Most of the crimes that old Dick Tracy contends with are as old as police history itself. I don't create them, by golly".

The retort is hardly effective; the harm done might well come not from creating the crime but from popularizing it. Indeed several Catholic reviews are raising an alarm over the popularity and influence of crime comics.

Even Ireland is being swamped by that special type of publication. As the *Irish Monthly* remarks in a noteworthy study by Mr. W. Mahon-Smith, the term "comics" has come to mean the whole class of picture narrations, including the comic section and comic-strips of British and still more of the American Press. It should be noted that the word "comic" now carries no risible implication. Many comic-strip and most comic books are popularly called "crime-comics" and appear to be exclusively devoted to battle, murder, torture and sudden death. Last year in October an exhibition of children's comics was held in London, mainly for the benefit of the Parent-Teachers Associations which are stirring up a campaign in Great Britain against this menace to children. The exhibition showed the change from the harmless fantasy of earlier years to the horror "comics" of today which deal in gross violence, "scientific" terrors and sex relations.

These comics are printed on dreadful paper and carry such blurred illustrations that they are as bad for the eyes as for the taste and moral outlook of boys and girls. The covers are lurid and garish, and the language is elementary; conversation does not seem necessary in this realm of peculiar heroes; words like, Clang! Boom! Wham! and Ugh! are enough to suggest the administration and reception of violence, the whole talk being comfortably inserted in balloons issuing from the mouth. Violence in the form of beating, shooting, strangling and torture is the key-note of language and illustrations. Most of the heroes are Fascists or dressed in Fascist style; the villains or enemies have book-noses. A steady anti-intellectualism is maintained. The scientist and philosopher are 'mad' fellows; the "ham fists", the "nut-cracker jaw and

coat-hanger shoulders" characterise the hero. A most popular hero is the "Superman", a magical fellow who can levitate himself, has the strength of a hundred Galahads and does not fight fair. He is justice itself, and transcends the law of the land as well as the law of gravity. He is plagiarised in many guises: Batman, Black Knight, Catman, Fighting Yank, Plasticman and what not. Better still there are "Planetary Comics", what might be called "Cosmic Comics", with Dan Dare battling with horrid green monsters who live on Venus, or Space-Rover Pete who moves at ease on a "super-supersonic-radar-atomic-plane".

The Irish Monthly notes that a great number of "crime-comics" are linked up with the Hollywood film industry and advertise stars of crime films or those Westerns in which the bulk of the killing is done by "sympathetic" characters. The "crime-comic" reader naturally becomes a "crime-film" addict. And the education is complete! Mr. Walter Mahon Smith ends with a warning: "The thinking Christian Ireland of Newman's dream is in grave danger of being succeeded by a moronic land of robots who take their ideals from "Superman" comic-strips, crime-comics and violence films".

Across the Atlantic Ocean, a equally striking alarm was raised. The point of view was quite different and deserves the attention not only of American patriots but also of all believers in democracy and anti-communism. As early as September 1950, Mr. Richard L. G. Deverall showed in *America* that certain types of movies help Communist propaganda in Asian countries. In December 1951, he drew a similar indictment against American crime comic books, whilst noting that information from Rome reported Communist attacks on any proposed restrictions on comic books. Most of

our readers have not the fortune of receiving *America* (America Press, 116 Main Street, Norwalk, Conn.—U.S.A.) and will be grateful for a summary of Mr. Deverall's views. What struck him is that the Indian reader automatically refers to Bombay bank-robbers in terms of the "Chicago-type gangster", because in the comic books which deluge Asia, the American gangster runs riot, guns spit, men fall and Cadillacs tear down the road at breakneck speed with the bank's cash in the rear. He was also struck with questions he was asked: "How many lynching parties have you attended?" or again: "How many Red Indians have you killed?" (He must have been unlucky in his contacts, for there are few Indians that would ask such rude questions). Yet he was asked, and he felt somewhat embarrassed in answering, because certain authentic Americans supply Asian people with the sorry material in the guise of western comic books which flood Asia.

Quite naturally the Communist agent is prompt to suggest to the Asian intellectual: "Don't believe me. Just take a look at the Western comic books. They are samples of the wonderful American culture and the American way of life. These comic books are from the Land of Uncle Shan." A Sanskrit professor took him round for a walk, and after having shown him hundreds of youngsters thumbing through American gangster, sex and western comic books, told him in a friendly way: "Now perhaps you do not wonder why Soviet propaganda is so effective in my country. Our people grow up on your comic books and reject your way of life because it lacks culture and decency When they mature the picture of crime and gangsterism remains identified with America long after they stop reading comic books."

Mr. Deverall's experience was the same in Hong Kong, in Manila, in Jakarta, in Karachi, in Calcutta, and most so in New Delhi. Soviet newspapers and magazines told Asian readers of Russian family life, of education of culture and music. The American contribution seemed mainly to be sex novels, and the usual assortment of crime, gangster and western comic books.

It would be futile to argue that educated Asians know more about America and are sensible enough not to judge her by the comic books mass-produced by her capitalists. The fact remains that such types of popular literature feed Communist propaganda, and even apart from that, have a baneful influence on Indian and on American children. They are good neither for home consumption nor for export.

Responsible men in America have duly protested against the standard and influence of comic books. In late 1950 a Joint Legislative Committee of New York was asked by Dr. Fr. Wertham, a psychiatrist, to support a public health law "which would forbid the sale and display of all crime comic books to children under the age of fifteen years." Noting that the production of crime comic books runs from 40 to 80 millions per month, he rightly concluded "the crime comic book industry is one of the most subversive groups in our country today."

Comic books are an instrument for good or for evil, concludes Mr. Deverall. Why should not a drive be mounted for decent and wholesome comic books, for which the real history of America supplies ample material? But at the same time why should not a law be passed to remove a wholly subversive industry which saps the mind of American children and of Asian

children and wrecks the good name of America all over the world ?

The review *America* pursued the study of Mr. Deverall with an article by St. E. Donlon, H.C.G. (January 26, 1952). This study ranged over the problem of comic books in other countries. In France a law was passed in 1949 which was the outcome of a two years' campaign by educators, church leaders and others. In spite of the subtle and obstinate resistance of the producers, one can say that on the basis of evidence up to the middle of 1951, "some of the worst have disappeared, a number have been completely disinfected about a dozen though, still not satisfactory, have improved". As a deputy had said in Parliament, "What is the use of sweating out financial and economic measures if we do not know how to protect the nation's most precious capital, the human capital, and the child, the first resource of the country ? What is the use of balancing the budget, if we do not know how to rebalance the morals of the nation ?"

In Italy the subject came up for debate after a survey conducted by the *Osservatore Romano*. So far no legislation has been reported, and the harmonious Italian language remains swollen with words like, Crash, Bang, Zowie, Oooowww, K.O. and O.K. In England economic friction hampered the direct import of U.S. comics, but the flow was diverted and re-started *via* the continent. Several teacher and parent associations have approached the Ministry of Education, Scotland Yard and the Archbishop of Canterbury to prevent the sale of "these pernicious and degrading publications . . . calculated to have damaging effect on the young people, both morally and culturally". In Canada the Parliament amended its criminal code in

December 1950 so as to outlaw crime comics. In the U.S.A. an Association of Comic Book Publishers was formed in 1950 ; it adopted a "code". But hearings in New York City before a New York Joint Legislative Committee showed that little had been done by the industry to prove its good-will.

The above surveys of *Irish Monthly* and of *America* are sufficient to show that the comic book problem is a world problem. It is estimated that every third tree cut down in Canada for paper-pulp during 1951 was used to print the 700,000,000 crime-comics which were produced in America in that year, seven hundred million digests of beatings, shootings, blood-puddles, seven hundred million lessons teaching children all over the world that violence is heroic and murder a red-hot thrill. The problem does exist in Indian cities ; the extent to which it exists may not have been ascertained but deserves an enquiry by educators and parents and may call for suitable legislation. Let us not reserve our blame for the only producers of crime comics ; if there were no buyers, there would be no producers. Let us have our budget balanced ; let us also keep our children's mind balanced !

A. L.



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Social Action is a monthly devoted to social problems, and is under the direction of the L. I. S. O.

The Editorial Board do not necessarily endorse the individual views of contributors.

The yearly subscription is Rs 4 or 6 s. 6 d., or \$ 1. 50

Manuscripts, subscriptions, advertisements and remittances should be addressed to *The Manager, Social Action, St Vincent Street, POONA 1.*

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The L. I. S. O. was started at Poona on January 8, 1951 and is at present staffed by the following members of the Society of Jesus :

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Edited by A. Lallemand, Indian Institute of Social Order, Poona 1.

Printed and published by A. S. Durairaj, De Nobili Press, Pudur P. O., Madurai.

